

Should Children With Head Lice Stay Home from School?

Children with head lice should be treated.

The American Academy of Pediatrics and the National Association of School Nurses do **not** support school exclusion due to nits.

It is important to remember:

- Head lice are common among young children
- Head lice do **not** spread disease
- Cases of head lice are often misdiagnosed
- Children may have head lice for several weeks with no symptoms

Diagnosed children should avoid head-to-head contact with other children until the lice are gone. Schools and child care facilities should let families know when there is a case of head lice.



Information Resources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Association of School Nurses
American Academy of Pediatrics
Caring for Kids
Healthfinder.gov

The Helpful Handbook on Head Lice



Prevention & Treatment Guidelines

For more information and guidance on head lice, contact the
Gallatin City-County Health Department at 406-582-3100

Human Services
215 W Mendenhall Room 117
Bozeman, MT 59715



"Committed to the protection and promotion of public health."

Gallatin City-County Health Department

What are Head Lice?

Head lice are tiny, barely visible insect-like animals ("arthropods") that may live on the head and cause itching. Lice lay eggs, called nits, which stick very close to the scalp.

Head lice do **not** spread disease! Having head lice does not mean you are not clean.

Nits are about the size of a knot in a piece of thread, oval-shaped, hard to see, and are often confused for dandruff. Adults are about the size of a sesame seed, have six legs, and are tan to greyish-white in color.



Head lice are most commonly found on the scalp, behind the ears and near the neckline at the back of the neck. Although head lice often cause intense itching, one may still have head lice without itching symptoms.

Check your child's head for head

Become a Head Lice Detective

lice and their eggs (nits). Use a bright light for better detection. Pay close attention to the scalp, and lift and separate hairs behind the ears and at the nape of the neck.



Finding adults is very difficult because there are very few of them and they move quickly. If crawling lice are not seen, finding nits within 1/4 inch from the scalp **confirms** that a person has lice and should be treated!

Prevention: How to Avoid Getting Lice

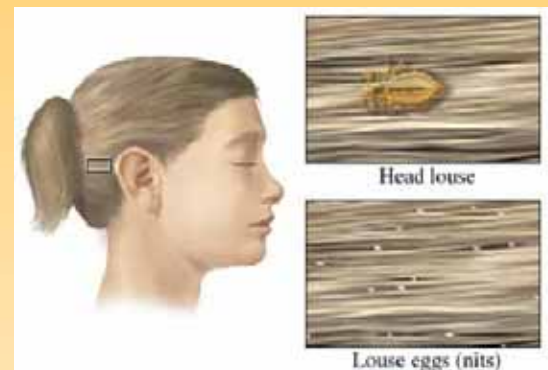
Lice are common, especially in children. Head lice spread through direct contact among children or indirectly on items such as hats, combs, hairbrushes and head phones.

To help prevent you or your child from getting lice:

- ♦ Watch for signs of head lice such as head scratching
- ♦ Don't share combs, brushes, hats or other personal items with persons

- ♦ who may have lice
- ♦ Thoroughly wash and dry combs, brushes, hats, clothing and bedding of those diagnosed with a lice infestation in hot water and dryer

Head lice can live up to three days off the scalp, but depend on humans for survival. They cannot live on pets, such as cats and dogs!



- ♦ **Do not** use chemicals or products not approved for the treatment of head lice

Shortly after treatment, carefully remove lice and nits with a fine comb until all are gone.

Procedures for eliminating any other potential sources of lice in the home include the following:

- ♦ Cleaning all personal head gear, clothing items and linen with a hot water machine wash and a hot cycle dryer for at least twenty minutes
- ♦ Sealing all personal articles (clothing, bedspreads, blankets, pillows, or stuffed animals) that cannot be washed in a plastic bag for a period of one week
- ♦ Soaking personal combs and brushes in a lice-killing product
- ♦ Vacuuming everywhere, including carpets, mattresses, upholstered furniture, and car seats
- ♦ Mopping linoleum, tile and hardwood floors

How to Treat Head Lice

Treating head lice involves removing eggs and killing lice so that they cannot continue to lay eggs.

There are a number of over-the-counter treatment products, usually in rinse creams or shampoo forms. It is highly recommended that you:

- ♦ Consult with your doctor or pharmacist for advice regarding appropriate treatment
- ♦ Use only one treatment product at a time, and follow the directions carefully and completely